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MACEDONIA AND THE FEDERATION MOVEMENT IN THE BALKANS

Description

An examination of the movement toward Balkan or South Slav federation, based on the autonomy of Macedonia, which is being promoted by dominant political groups in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania.

6 December 1944

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SUMMARY

Balkan federation is at present actively espoused by dominant political groups in three of the five Balkan countries, and appears to enjoy the approval of at least one of the great powers. Hence it represents, for the first time, a practical political issue of immediate importance.

Before 1914 ideas of Balkan federation were put forward primarily as a cloak for nationalistic aims. Their realization was impeded by intense rivalries and competition among the Balkan states for such disputed areas as Macedonia. Between the two wars federation was advocated successively by radical agrarian and labor parties and by liberal, middle-class intellectual elements. The present federation movement, largely confined to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania, is promoted by left wing groups which advocate a democratic federation of autonomous national units, organized in accordance with the principles of self-determination.

The nucleus of the present drive toward federation is the close understanding between the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement and the Bulgarian Fatherland Front Government, based on an apparent community of views regarding the future of Macedonia as an autonomous unit in the future federative Yugoslavia. There is some evidence that Bulgaria has agreed to the incorporation of certain Bulgarian territories in this future Macedonian unit.

A less well-defined rapprochement has occurred between the Yugoslav and Albanian resistance movements. Yugoslav-Albanian relations in the past have been prejudiced by conflicting territorial aspirations, especially in Macedonia. A solution of this conflict on the basis of Macedonian autonomy and Balkan federation might be acceptable to both sides.

The rapprochement of Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania has been accompanied by a partial estrangement of Greece. Greek leaders are cool toward the present federation movement, and have repudiated claims to Greek territory put forward by the advocates of Macedonian autonomy.

The attitude of non-Balkan powers is conditioned by the fact that (a) the federation movement is being promoted by groups sympathetic to Soviet Russia, and (b) an enlarged Macedonia might give the proposed federation a direct outlet on the Aegean. Turkish circles are clearly opposed to South Slav federation. Great Britain is unlikely to favor a movement which implies an indirect enhancement of Soviet influence in the Balkans and threatens the territorial integrity of Greece. The Russian attitude is not clear, although both opponents and advocates of South Slav federation have claimed that Russia supports the movement. The Russian press appears, however, to approve the current Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement and the creation of an autonomous Macedonia of uncertain territorial extent.

MACEDONIA AND THE FEDERATION MOVEMENT IN THE BALKANS

I. Introduction

Plans for Balkan or South Slav federation have been proposed for centuries, but hitherto with few practical results. Today, however, Balkan federation is actively espoused by dominant political groups in three of the five Balkan countries, and appears to enjoy the approval of at least one of the great powers. Federation also involves the perennial Macedonian question in that an autonomous Macedonian unit is envisaged as a component part of the proposed South Slav (and eventually Balkan) federation. The frontiers of the Macedonian state and the political complexion and alignment of a future federation are matters of concern not only to the Balkan states themselves but also to the great powers traditionally interested in southeastern Europe and the Mediterranean.

A. Background of the Federation Movement[1]

During the nineteenth century Balkan rulers and statesmen occasionally showed some interest in cooperation with their neighbors and even talked of federation, but only so long as it suited the interests of their particular countries. In the 1840's and 1850's Rumanian and Hungarian leaders drew up any number of projects for Danubian and/or Balkan federation; but these plans were forgotten as soon as the nationalist aspirations of the two countries were

1. L. S. Stavrianos, Balkan Federation: A History of the Movement toward Balkan Unity in Modern Times /Smith College Studies in History, Vol. XXVII/ Northampton 1944.

satisfied, for the moment, by the unification of Moldavia and Wallachia and by the Austro-Hungarian constitutional compromise of 1867, respectively. The primary aim of Prince Michael in organizing the first Balkan alliance system of the 1860's was not federation but to make of Serbia the Piedmont of the Balkans. As for the Balkan League of 1912, it was purely a military alliance in which Pashich, Venizelos and Ferdinand were each interested mainly in acquiring as large a portion of European Turkey as possible. When the alliances proved an obstacle to this goal, they were promptly broken and the second Balkan War was the result.

Generally speaking, with the exception of a few revolutionary idealists, in the period up to 1914 federation was a mere slogan, adopted when it served as a means to some other end (usually national independence or expansion) and abandoned when it no longer fulfilled that purpose. Rivalries among the individual Balkan states, competition for the remaining portions of European Turkey, and behind the scenes intrigues by the Great Powers, all combined to render impossible any permanent union.

A perennial focus of territorial conflicts during this period was the region of Macedonia, a mixed population area north of Salonika which has been described as the melting pot of the Balkans. Its population included Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians, Albanians, Vlachs, Jews, and "Macedonians." The latter element may be classified as one of the many South Slav types, but until the end of the nineteenth century they generally lacked national consciousness, with the result

that all three three of their neighbors laid claim to them. After the Balkan and first World Wars, Yugoslavia and Greece managed to gain the bulk of Macedonia. Bulgaria adopted a revisionist foreign policy in the inter-war period, claiming portions of eastern Yugoslavia on grounds of ethnography and access to the Aegean through Greek territory on grounds of economic necessity.

Since the first World War a federation movement with considerable mass following has developed under the leadership of two groups. The first of these, which was most active in the 1920's, consisted of radical agrarian and labor (principally communist) parties. The agrarians advocated a vague, utopian "Green International" which would include all of the predominantly peasant countries of Eastern Europe. The communists under the aegis of the Third International worked for the establishment of a Balkan Communist Federation, in which Macedonia would constitute an autonomous unit. When the opposition proved too strong they sought an alliance with Stambolisky's successors in Bulgaria and with Radich in Croatia. Both the agrarians and the communists thought and acted along international class lines, and therefore, federation formed an integral part of their philosophies and was essential for the fulfillment of their social aspirations.

With the establishment of dictatorial regimes in one after another of the Balkan countries, the radical agrarian and labor parties were suppressed and the leadership of the federation movement in the 1930's fell to liberal, middle-class, intellectual elements. For this group federation was viewed primarily as a prerequisite

for the maintenance of peace among the Balkan peoples. Semi-official Balkan conferences were organized and educational campaigns conducted, in the hope of arousing public opinion sufficiently to induce the Balkan governments to settle their differences, establish closer relations, and eventually unite within a federal framework. The collapse of the League of Nations and of the general European system of collective security and the reversion to balance of power politics automatically put an end to these hopes. By April 1941 Hitler's "New Order," rather than a peaceful, voluntary federation, had become the lot of the Balkan peoples.

B. Orientation and Scope of the Present Federation Movement

In the ensuing struggle against Axis rule, the left wing groups played the leading role. Today these groups are in a dominant position, especially in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania. As in the 1920's, these groups are now once more advocating federation, but with certain important differences. Whereas in the 1920's much stress was laid upon the details and nature of the proposed social revolution as well as upon federation, today the future social structure of the component units of the federation is not specified. This is to be expected, since the resistance movements include various parties and groups (including the Communists) which have agreed to reserve socio-economic questions to the post-liberation period. To date, partisan leaders in Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia have specified simply that a future federation will consist of autonomous national units, and "will be based on the fullest democratic rights."

Thus far the current federation movement has been confined largely to Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. In Rumania the internal situation is still too confused and unsettled to permit planning of future inter-Balkan relations. Greek adherence to a South Slav bloc is unlikely for the present due to memories of the recent Bulgarian occupation of Thrace and Greek Macedonia, the existence of Greek territorial claims to parts of Albania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, and the sensitivity of all Greeks on the Macedonian question.[1]

II. Yugoslav-Bulgarian Rapprochement and Macedonian Autonomy

Current activities, both political and military, in favor of South Slav or Balkan federation, are largely the work of the partisan forces in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and to a lesser degree in Albania. One of the most comprehensive statements on the subject is that of Dr. Josip Smodlaka, Acting Foreign Minister of the Yugoslav Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation: "Our first aim is free federal Yugoslavia. But that's not enough to ensure peace in the Balkans. We must have a Balkan federation, and the first step would be a union of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. Second, we will invite Albania to enter with full and equal rights. Then we will be strong enough to repel any attacks from whatever quarter."[2]

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1. Cf. section IV, below.
2. New York Times, 11 April 1944.

The Anti-Fascist Council has consistently acted along these lines. In November 1943 it promulgated the principle of a federal Yugoslavia which "will ensure full equality for the peoples of Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina."[1] On 5 October 1944 Tito signed a pact with the Bulgarian government providing for "military cooperation in the fight against the common enemy" and for the settlement of all questions which might arise between the two states in "a spirit of fraternal and common interests."[2] In accordance with this pact the Bulgarian Fatherland Front Government has been cooperating closely with Tito in common military operations against the Germans, and a Bulgarian military mission has been sent to Tito's headquarters. Numerous sources attest the very close liaison which now exists between the two South Slav countries.

This Bulgarian-Yugoslav cooperation is not confined to military affairs but is evident to a very marked degree also in political matters. This is illustrated by the strikingly similar views expressed by Marshal Tito and the Bulgarian Premier Georgiev during interviews granted coincidentally on the same day, 23 November 1944. After recalling that the new Yugoslavia is to comprise six federal units (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro), Marshal Tito stated to the Bulgarian journalist,

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1. Inter-Continent News, 15 December 1943.
2. R & A No. 1175.81, 14 October 1944.

Stoian Krustev, : "The new federative and democratic Yugoslavia will apply all its powers to the closest collaboration and rapprochement with its Balkan neighbors and, in the first place, with brotherly Bulgaria. Differences will never again appear in the Balkans. This collaboration is rendered possible because... the old antinational regimes have been removed from power and have been replaced by truly national representatives."[1] In his interview with the editor of the Bulgarian weekly, Slavyanski Yug, Premier Georgiev emphasized that between Yugoslavia and Bulgaria "there must be real friendship" and "we expect that in the near future it will be possible to develop relations between these two countries." He added that Bulgarians are following the creation of federal Yugoslavia with great interest and sympathy, and that when the federal organization is completed "the question of political relations and cooperation between Balkan nations, especially between Southern Slavs, will be brought up. I can definitely state," he said, "that Bulgaria will create no difficulties, on the contrary the Bulgarian nation is ready to support the idea of close relations and cooperation between Southern Slavs."[2]

The basis of this political collaboration is the remarkable unanimity of opinion amongst present South Slav leaders regarding the age-old Macedonian question. On 2 August 1944, 125 Macedonian representatives met in Bitoly as Macedonia's National Assembly and, in the

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1. FCC: Daily, 23 November 1944.
2. FCC: Ticker, 23 November 1944.

presence of delegates from Tito's Supreme Staff, Allied Military Missions, and the High Command of Serbia, proclaimed Macedonia a federal state in the new federative Yugoslavia.[1] In both Bulgaria and Yugoslavia this event has been greeted with unbounded enthusiasm as an important step in the direction of South Slavic and even Balkan federation. When Skoplye was liberated from the Germans on 15 November, the inhabitants celebrated by flying the flags of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia as well as the red flag of the Macedonian Army of Liberation.[2] In Yugoslav Macedonia, anti-fascist youth meetings are being held with slogans such as "Long live the alliance of the youth of Tito's Yugoslavia and free Bulgaria."[3] On 26 October 1944 the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Macedonia was permitted to broadcast over the Sofia Radio a fervent appeal to all Macedonians -- Yugoslav, Greek, and Bulgarian -- to unite and fight against the invader in order to establish a future united Macedonian state.[4] Typical of the optimism concerning the significance of the new Macedonian state is the following excerpt from an article entitled "Free Macedonia" in the Sofia Fatherland Front paper Svoboda (19 October 1944):[5]

"Macedonia's liberation and the creation of a separate, federal Macedonian state in the new democratic federative Yugoslavia is a fact of the highest importance regarding peace in the Balkans. It

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1. Sofia Radio, 21 October 1944 (News Digest #1585).
2. FCC: Ticker, 17 November 1944.
3. Sofia Radio, 17 November 1944 (Press Intell. Cable).
4. Sofia Radio, 26 October 1944 (News Digest #1592).
5. Sofia Radio, 19 October 1944 (News Digest #1584).

is the requisite for the establishment of true Bulgarian-Serb fraternal relations -- the granite foundation of which will be the basis of the solid construction of the Balkan bloc.... The Fatherland Front policy is also oriented in that direction."

Even more illustrative of the constantly accelerating trend toward South Slav unity, with Macedonia as the keystone of the union, is the letter of protest sent in November 1944 to Prime Minister Papandreou of Greece by Dimitar Vlahov, Vice President of the Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia. Referring to Papandreou's recent demands for an extension of Greece's northern frontiers on grounds of national security,[1] Vlahov rejected them as "imperialistic," because "the population of Pirin Macedonia which expresses its wish to be united with its brothers in Federal Yugoslavia has never threatened the security of its brothers in Aegean Macedonia."[2]

The significant part of this quotation is the declaration that the Pirin Macedonians, who have been under Bulgarian rule since 1913, desire to be united with the Yugoslav Macedonians -- or, in other words, with the new Macedonian state. This remarkable assertion probably was based on the contemporaneous speeches of the three authoritative Bulgarian delegates[3] to the Belgrade meeting of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Assembly of Serbia, who it is reported, publicly renounced

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1. R & A No. 1175.83, 28 October 1944.
2. FCC: Daily, 14 November 1944.
3. State Minister Tarpashev, Bulgarian representative to the Yugoslav National Committee Todorov, and Commander of the Bulgarian Army of Liberation General Ivanov. FCC: Ticker, 13 November 1944.

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any claims to Bulgarian Macedonia.[1] On the basis of available information it is impossible to estimate what proportion of the people of Pirin Macedonia actually wishes to join the new Macedonian state. There is, however, no ground for doubting Vlahov's assertions, and no protests have been made against them in Bulgaria.

III. Yugoslav-Albanian Rapprochement

The rapprochement between Partisan Yugoslavia and Bulgaria has been accompanied by a less well-defined but none the less significant rapprochement between the Yugoslav and Albanian resistance movements. Close military and political ties exist between the FNC, now the dominant group in Albania, and the Yugoslav National Liberation Movement. Yugoslavs participated in the formation of the FNC, a Yugoslav was an early member of the FNC Central Council,[2] and a Yugoslav military mission was sent to FNC Headquarters in September 1944. Moreover the FNC has recently undertaken joint military action with both Yugoslav and Macedonian Partisans. One of the chief aims behind the FNC drive into Northern Albania was to join forces with the Yugoslavs through the Kossovo-Metohiye Staff, a mixed partisan group including Albanians, Serbs, and Montenegrins, which was formed in December 1943 and is operating under the direction of Tito.[3]

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1. OSS source S, 15 November 1944.
2. R & A No. 1661, "The Role of Communism in the Balkans."
3. R & A No. 1175.74, 26 August 1944.

Yugoslav-Albanian relations, like Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, have in the past been seriously prejudiced by conflicting territorial aspirations, especially in Macedonia.[1] According to the Yugoslav census of 1921 (which was not likely to favor Albanian claims), Albanians comprise over 25 percent of the population of Yugoslav Macedonia and of Southern Serbia. Albanians constitute a majority in the Kossovo-Metohiye area (including Prishtina and Prizren), to which Albania traditionally lays claim, and form an important minority as far south and east as Skoplye, Kumanovo and Ohrid.[2] In 1941 the Italians annexed to Albania the Kossovo-Metohiye area and a strip of territory including Tetovo and running down to the eastern shore of Lake Ohrid.

At least the southern part (roughly as far as Prishtina) and possibly all of this area presumably will be involved in any future Macedonian settlement. The Albanian nationalists have made much of this "Ethnic Albania" and stirred up anti-Serb sentiment, but they are now a negligible factor. The all-powerful FNC until recently said little on frontier issues, and concentrated instead on the struggle for liberation. But in October 1944, in reply to official Greek claims to Southern Albania, Enver Hexha (FNC leader) stated that Albania's claim to that area was indisputable and added that the Kossovo

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1. Cf. "The Kossovo Region," R & A No. 1982 (forthcoming).
2. "Handbook of Yugoslav Population Statistics," R & A No. 1366, pp. 64-5.

question would be settled by a plebiscite.[1] A plebiscite might not be acceptable to the Yugoslav government, however, in view of the Albanian majority in this area and the great sentimental importance which the Serbs attach to it.

Macedonian autonomy might offer a way out of this impasse. Whereas both the Albanians and the Serbs would object to rule of the disputed area by the other nation, they might both be willing to have the disputed area included in a federal Macedonian state with a government in which all the nationalities could participate. That this solution to the problem is by no means impossible is indicated by their close military cooperation in the past; by the recent statement of Lt. General Milovan Djilas of Tito's General Staff that Albania's most sincere friend is the new Yugoslavia;[2] and by statements of FNC leaders in favor of "a future federation of the Balkan democracies in which all the nations will participate with equal rights."[3]

In a recent statement outling his post-war program for Albania, Hoxha did not mention Macedonia but he made the following significant observations on foreign policy. (1) Southern Albania will remain Albanian even if it means war against Greece. (2) Albania is looking to a close alliance with the Tito Government since "we are bound together now with the Yugoslavs by blood ties." (3) An immediate

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1. R & A No. 1175,83, 28 October 1944.
2. OWI: European News Digest, 11 November 1944.
3. R & A No. 1175.81, 14 October 1944.

Balkan federation is unlikely because of frontier disputes, "but I am going to make every effort to form a strong brotherhood among the peoples of the Balkans."[1]

IV. The Greek Position

The movement which has brought Yugoslav, Bulgarian, and Albanian leaders closer together has been accompanied by a partial estrangement of Greece from the incipient Balkan bloc -- notwithstanding the fact that on 15 January 1942 the royal Greek and Yugoslav governments in exile had themselves concluded a federative pact looking toward future Balkan union. The present Greek political leaders have been cool toward the present federation movement, which is sponsored primarily by left-wing resistance elements, takes no account of Greek territorial claims in Southern Albania, Macedonia, and Thrace,[2] and indeed represents a challenge to the territorial integrity of Greece itself.

A. Macedonian Claims on Greece

This challenge arises from the frequently-expressed desire of advocates of Macedonian autonomy to unite all Macedonians, including those now under Greek rule, within the new Macedonian state. The Macedonian leader, General Mihailo Apostolski (former Yugoslav army major and Tito-appointed commander of the Macedonian Partisan military units) recently declared that the autonomous state of Macedonia would

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1. New York Times, 4 December 1944.
2. Cf. "Greek Territoiral Claims and Aspiration," R & A No. 2662, forthcoming.

include Salonika and Greek Aegean territory as far east as the Mesta (Nestos) River.[1]

Major General Svetozar Vukmanovich-Tempo (Tito's personal military and political representative in Macedonia and Serbia) in an address before the Supreme Anti-Fascist National Assembly of Liberation of Serbia, has stated that the Macedonian nation wishes to build up its national confederate state within federal Yugoslavia, and that "the entire Macedonian nation also wishes to achieve a complete union with the remainder of the Macedonian people so far under Greek and Bulgarian rule in this confederate Macedonian state. In realization of this task we...recognize that we have the full support of all Slavonic nations..."[2] Equally bluntly Vukmanovich-Tempo stated that he had travelled through Macedonian territory located within the Greek and Bulgarian states "and I express the wish of the Macedonian people of these states that they desire to join themselves to the Motherland."[3]

Similarly, Dimitar Vlahov, in the statement already quoted, not only repudiated Greek territorial claims affecting Macedonia but also took exception to the policies of the Greek government toward Macedonians in Greece. "I protest," he said, "against the (persecution of) Macedonian antifascists in Aegean Macedonia by organs of the Greek

1. OWI: European News Digest, 24 October 1944.
2. OWI: European News Digest, 17 November 1944.
3. OSS source A #45139, 14 November 1944.

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Government for their fighting against the German occupiers and their desire to speak Macedonian and enjoy their national rights of liberty."

Significant also is the report that, in the middle of November, 288 "young Macedonians, Albanians, Turks, Vlachs and Jews" met in Greek Macedonia and established "a union of all anti-fascist youth" and "a youth union for Macedonia's liberation." It is noteworthy that Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians are lumped together as "Macedonians" in this report, and that the meeting was held on Greek territory.[1]

In contrast to these unofficial manifestations, it should be noted that thus far neither the Royal nor the Partisan Yugoslav governments have officially laid claim to Greek territory; indeed, the Acting Foreign Minister of the Yugoslav Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation, Dr. Josip Smodlaka, has stated categorically that "Greek Macedonia naturally belongs to Greece and is part of Greece."[2] Nevertheless it is very unlikely that such prominent leaders as Vlahov, Apostolski and Vukmanovich have been expressing merely their personal views.

F. The Greek Reaction

The official Greek position was succinctly stated as early as 24 September 1944 by George Cartalis, Greek Minister of Information, who declared that his government would have nothing to do with Marshal Tito's suggestion of an autonomous Macedonia as a unit in a future

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1. OWI: European News Digest, 19 November 1944.
2. New York Times, 11 April 1944.

federation. "The Bulgarians and Yugoslavs," he added, "can have one if they want, but Greek Macedonia is entirely peopled by Greeks and will remain with the Fatherland."[1]

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1. New York Times, 25 September 1944. The ethnic situation in Greek Macedonia and Thrace is shown in the following table, taken from A. A. Pallis, "Racial Migration in the Balkans during the years 1912-1924," Geographical Journal, LXVI (1925), 330. The same figures are given in the map attached to League of Nations, Greek Refugee Settlement, (Geneva, 1926).

	TOTAL NUMBER			PERCENT		
	1912	1920	1924	1912	1920	1924
Greek Macedonia						
Greeks	513,000	577,000	1,277,000	43	52	89
Bulgarians	119,000	104,000	77,000	10	9	5
Moslems	475,000	350,000	2,000	39	31	0
Others	98,000	91,000	91,000	8	8	6
Total	1,205,000	1,122,000	1,447,000	100	100	100
Western Thrace						
Greeks	87,000	68,000	189,000	36	36	62
Bulgarians	35,000	35,000	23,000	15	18	7
Moslems	111,000	84,000	84,000	47	44	28
Others	4,000	8,000	8,000	2	2	3
Total	237,000	191,000	304,000	100	100	100

This position undoubtedly has the wholehearted support of all parties and groups in Greece, including the EAM bloc and the Communists.[1] All sections of the Greek public unquestionably support the government in its insistence that Greek Macedonia remain Greek, even if a future autonomous Macedonian state should be established as part of a South Slav federation. On the other hand, if Greek participation in a Balkan federation should become a practical issue at some future date, it may be safely surmised that the leftist EAM bloc or its successors will be the most sympathetic to close ties with Greece's northern neighbors, while the more conservative and nationalistic parties will stress the dangers of Slavic hegemony and will instead favor closer relations with Turkey and Great Britain.

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1. It is generally agreed that the so-called Petrich Agreement of Greek and Bulgarian communists, for the creation of an autonomous Macedonian state (including Salonika) in a Balkan Communist Federation, was a forgery (R & A No. 1175.38, 11 December 1943). But that the Germans and the Greek quislings publicized this forgery is significant. Obviously they felt that the most effective way of discrediting the EAM and the Communists would be to convince the Greek public that they had agreed to the alienation of the northern provinces. A Bulgarian minister (Dimitar Neikov) has stated specifically that he and his colleague, Dobri Terpeshev, concluded in the autumn of 1944 an agreement with local EAM leaders for the temporary administration of Thrace (Daga, 19 September 1944). Although this has been denied by representatives in Greece of the Communist party, EAM, ELAS, and the government, it seems likely that certain local Greek leaders in Thrace disregarded directives from their national bodies and agreed to some working arrangement. But if this occurred, it is clear that these people acted entirely on their own, and had no popular support in Greece. (R & A No. 1175.81, 14 October 1944.)

VI. The Attitude of the Non-Balkan Powers

The attitude of non-Balkan powers toward the question of Balkan or South Slav federation is necessarily conditioned by the interests of these powers in the Balkan area, and by consideration of the probable political orientation of such a federation if it were formed. Two facts about the present movement toward Balkan federation appear to be of primary importance in shaping the attitudes of interested powers: (1) the movement is promoted chiefly by groups which are sympathetic to Soviet Russia and presumably responsive to Soviet influence; (2) an extension of the frontiers of Macedonia, such as is claimed by some advocates of Macedonian autonomy, would give the proposed federation a direct outlet on the Aegean Sea. Thus, in theory at least, formation of a South Slav federation might result in giving Russia indirect control of most of the Balkans and access to the eastern Mediterranean.

Turkey in the past has been an active member of the pre-war Balkan Entente, and she would doubtless welcome a post-war Balkan bloc in which she could play an important role and which would include Greece. At present, however, it is obvious that Turkish circles are not pleased with the prospect of a South Slav outlet to the Aegean, and are anxious to maintain Turkey's common frontier with Greece. But the military and diplomatic position of Turkey is such that no official statements have been issued on this subject.

Great Britain, for traditional strategic reasons, is also opposed to South Slavic expansion to the Aegean, as was evident in the marked British concern over continued Bulgarian occupation of northern Greece prior to the recent armistice. Foreign Secretary Eden has spoken favorably of previous moves toward Balkan federation, such as the royal Greek-Yugoslav government in exile agreement of 1942.[1] It appears unlikely, however, that Great Britain would favor a movement like the present one, which implies an enhancement of Soviet influence in the Balkans and threatens the territorial integrity of Greece, whose government has enjoyed close British support.

Both opponents and advocates of South Slav federation have frequently claimed that the USSR is supporting the present movement -- Vukmanovich, for example, confidently advised the Serbian Anti-Fascist National Liberation Assembly that the task of uniting the Macedonian nation, including Macedonians under Greek and Bulgarian rule, has "the full support of all Slavonic nations."[2]

Nevertheless the Russian attitude is not clear. Judging from the attitude of the Russian press, the Soviet government (which opposed the Greek-Yugoslav government in exile pact of 1942 because it feared "cordon sanitaire" motives)[3] approves the current Yugoslav-Bulgarian rapprochement and the creation of a Macedonian state.[4]

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1. House of Commons, 16 December 1942.
2. OWI: European News Digest, 17 November 1944.
3. New York Times, 19 November 1943.
4. OSS #40622, 10 October 1944; OSS #43244, 25 November 1944.

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The Soviet view on the crucial question of the frontiers of Macedonia and/or Bulgaria is not known. That the Soviets might be holding open the possibility of a Bulgarian and/or Macedonian outlet to the Aegean is suggested, however, by the following facts: (1) The Soviet military authorities permitted Bulgarian occupation of northern Greece for about five weeks after they were in control of Bulgaria -- leading to considerable speculation as to the possibility of Soviet support of Bulgarian aspirations for an Aegean outlet; (2) The Sofia Radio, under Russian supervision, continues to broadcast propaganda to all Macedonians -- Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Greek -- in favor of an autonomous Macedonia with significantly vague frontier references; (3) Although Marshal Stalin and Prime Minister Churchill on 12 October 1944 agreed on Bulgarian evacuation of Greek territory, the Bulgarian armistice terms published on 28 October contained no references to frontiers.

In view of Prime Minister Churchill's later statement in the House of Commons that he had been "able to reach complete agreement" with Stalin "upon the tangled questions of the Balkans," it seems unlikely that the Soviet government at present will intervene actively in Yugoslav-Bulgarian relations, particularly since they are developing along lines satisfactory to the Russian viewpoint. If the "complete agreement" referred to by Churchill involved only Bulgarian evacuation, and not a return to the pre-war territorial status quo, then the Soviets would be free to support South Slav aspirations at the peace conference while refraining from curbing South Slav demands in the intervening period.